# .UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA INDIANAPOLIS DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,	)
Plaintiff,	)
v.	) Cause No. 1:19-cv-146
\$85,270.00 UNITED STATES CURRENCY,	)
Defendant.	)

#### **COMPLAINT OF FORFEITURE IN REM**

The United States of America, by counsel, Josh J. Minkler, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana, and Eric P. Babbs, Special Assistant United States Attorney, alleges as follows:

### **NATURE OF THE ACTION**

1. This is a civil action to forfeit property pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6) because the Defendant Currency is money furnished or intended to be furnished in exchange for a controlled substance, the proceeds traceable to such an exchange, or otherwise used or intended to be used to facilitate a violation of the Controlled Substances Act.

# PARTIES, JURISDICTION, AND VENUE

- 2. The defendant is Eight-Five Thousand Two Hundred and Seventy Dollars in United States Currency ("\$85,270.00" or "Defendant Currency") seized by the United States Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations ("DHS-HSI"), on May 31, 2018.
- 3. The Defendant Currency has been assigned Asset Identification Number 18-CBP-000526. It has been transferred to the custody of the United States Department of Homeland

Security, Customs and Border Protection ("DHS-CBP").

- 4. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1345 (district courts have original jurisdiction of all civil actions commenced by the United States) and § 1355 (district courts have original jurisdiction of any action for forfeiture, and action can be brought in a district in which any of the acts giving rise to the forfeiture occurred).
- 5. This Court has *in rem* jurisdiction over the Defendant Currency under 28 U.S.C. § 1355(b) (forfeiture action can be brought in a district in which any of the acts giving rise to the forfeiture occurred), and Rule G(3)(b)(i) of the Supplemental Rules for Admiralty or Maritime Claims and Asset Forfeiture Actions (clerk must issue a warrant to arrest property in the government's possession).
- 6. This Court is the appropriate venue in this matter pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1395(a) and (b) in that the forfeiture accrued in the Southern District of Indiana.

#### **FACTS**

- 7. Steven T. Casados, the individual from whom the Defendant Currency was seized, is a Washington resident with a criminal history related to violations of controlled substance laws. On March 12, 2012, Casados pled guilty to manufacturing, delivering, or possessing with intent to manufacture or deliver a controlled substance in *State of Washington v*. *Steven T. Casados*, No. 111029981 (Spokane County Superior Court). The court sentenced Casados to 29 months in jail.
- 8. Casados' sentence was ordered to be served concurrently with his sentence in *State of Washington v. Steven T. Casados*, No. 111010962 (Spokane County Superior Court), in which Casados was convicted on March 12, 2012 of various assault-related charges resulting from an incident that Casados pointed a loaded shotgun at a man in retaliation for a marijuana

theft.

- 9. Casados later sustained additional felony convictions related to controlled substances. In 2016, Casados was found guilty of one count of conspiracy to violate controlled substance laws and one count of violation related to controlled substance laws in *State of Washington v. Steven T. Casados*, No. 141034459 (Spokane County Superior Court).
- 10. Casados also had prior contact with DHS-HSI. On July 23, 2015, the Southwest Ohio Bulk Cash Smuggling task force was conducting surveillance on Casados. A task force officer stopped a U-Haul vehicle driven by Casados. Marijuana, other controlled substances, and multiple bundles of United States Currency totaling \$12,025.00 were located in the vehicle during the search. DHS-HSI adopted the seizure for federal administrative forfeiture, and Casados later submitted an offer in compromise and reached a settlement with DHS-CBP.
- 11. On May 31, 2018, Casados went to the Indianapolis International Airport with a boarding pass for Phoenix, Arizona en route to Spokane, Washington. Casados passed through a Transportation Security Administration ("TSA") checkpoint with a large amount of United States Currency in his backpack.
- 12. TSA notified a Special Agent and Task Force Officers with DHS-HSI, and these law enforcement officers made contact with Casados in the boarding area by his departure gate. Casados gave consent for the law enforcement officers to search his backpack. Casados' backpack was found to contain a large sum of United States Currency, which was packaged in multiple rubber-banded bundles.



- 13. Casados stated that he had taken \$100,000 out of a safety deposit box before his trip to Indianapolis for the Indianapolis Manheim car auction. Although Casados claimed that the currency was intended to be used at the Manheim car auction, he was unable to attend that auction because as he had arrived in Indianapolis, the auction was closed. It seemed highly improbable that Casados would have traveled halfway across the country to attend the auction without looking up the auction's normal business hours or adjusting his travel plan accordingly. Casados produced one sales agreement for a vehicle purchased in Ohio on May 30, 2018 for \$9,440.00. Casados' travel companion produced a list of vehicles and prices which they claimed to have compiled for this trip. But the sum of the prices on the list fell noticeably short of the amount of currency Casados claimed to have brought to Indianapolis.
- 14. Based on Casados' prior criminal history related to illegal narcotics trafficking, the amount of currency Casados traveled with, and the manner in which the currency was bundled and packaged, the investigators did not believe Casados' story. Thus, DHS-HSI seized the Defendant Currency found in Casados' backpack as the suspected proceeds of a controlled substance or money laundering offense.
- 15. A certified drug detection canine handled by an Indiana State Police officer was brought in to inspect the evidence bag containing the Defendant Currency. The canine's

examination resulted in a positive alert to the odor of a controlled substance.



16. The Defendant Currency was counted and found to be \$85,270.00 in the following denominations:

Denomination	Count	Amount
\$1	20	\$20
\$5	30	\$150
\$10	91	\$910
\$20	2787	\$55,740
\$50	169	\$8,450
\$100	200	\$20,000
Total:		\$85,270.00

# **ADMINISTRATIVE FORFEITURE PROCEEDINGS**

17. On July 6, 2018, DHS-CBP mailed a timely notice of seizure to Casados. The notice informed Casados of the agency's intent to pursue administrative forfeiture of the Defendant Currency. The notice gave Casados the options to file a petition for administrative reconsideration, submit an offer in compromise, abandon the property, or file a claim requesting

referral for court proceedings.

- 18. On August 2, 2018, DHS-CBP received a timely petition with attached documents from Casados' attorney, Mr. Monish Patel, seeking administrative reconsideration.
- 19. The documentation provided with the petition did not support Casados' claim regarding a legitimate source of the entire cache of currency. For example, the GEICO check for \$25,000.00 was dated May 17, 2016, while the \$11,371.00 Social Security check was dated July 5, 2012. Those dates were roughly two and six years, respectively, before the instant seizure. Additionally, the check from the United States Treasury reflected the currency remitted to Casados as part of the offer in compromise stemming from the 2015 drug-related seizure in Ohio. Finally, the balances in Casados' apparent business ledgers and bank account statements did not approximate the \$100,000 he claimed to have withdrawn from a safety deposit box prior to his trip, and may have duplicated some of the other proffered sources of income.
  - 20. DHS-CBP denied the petition in a letter to Casados' attorney.
- 21. On February 6, 2019, DHS-CBP received a timely claim from Casados' attorney requesting referral for court proceedings.
- 22. No other claims or petitions were received for the Defendant Currency. Upon receipt of Casados' claim, DHS-CBP referred the matter to the United States Attorney to initiate a judicial forfeiture action.

#### PERTINENT STATUTES AND REGULATIONS

- 23. Under 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1), it is unlawful for any person to manufacture, distribute, or dispense or possess with intent to manufacture, distribute, or dispense a controlled substance.
  - 24. Under 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6), all moneys furnished or intended to be furnished by

any person in exchange for a controlled substance, all proceeds traceable to such an exchange, and all moneys used or intended to be used to facilitate any violation of the Controlled Substances Act, including 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1), shall be subject to forfeiture to the United States and no property right shall exist in them.

#### **CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

25. Based on the allegations above, the Defendant Currency is "moneys . . . furnished or intended to be furnished by any person in exchange for a controlled substance," and/or "proceeds traceable to such an exchange," and/or "moneys . . . used or intended to be used to facilitate any violation of [the Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. § 801 *et seq.*]," and is therefore subject to forfeiture to the United States of America pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6).

WHEREFORE, the United States prays that the Clerk of the Court issue a warrant for arrest of the Defendant Currency pursuant to Rule G(3)(b)(i) of the Supplemental Rules for Admiralty or Maritime Claims and Asset Forfeiture Actions; that due notice be given to all parties to appear and show cause why the forfeiture should not be decreed; that judgment be entered declaring the defendant property forfeited to the United States for disposition according to law; and that the United States be granted all other just and proper relief.

Respectfully submitted,

JOSH J. MINKLER United States Attorney

By: <u>s/Eric P. Babbs</u>

Eric P. Babbs

Special Assistant United States Attorney Office of the United States Attorney 10 W. Market St., Suite 2100

Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-3048

Telephone: (317) 226-6333

Fax: (317) 226-5027

#### **VERIFICATION**

I, Daron S. Babcock, hereby verify and declare under penalty of perjury that I am a Special Agent for Homeland Security Investigations ("HSI"), that I have read the foregoing Verified Complaint in Rem and know the contents thereof, and that the matters contained in the Complaint are true to my own knowledge, except that those matters herein stated to be alleged on information and belief, and as to those matters I believe to be true.

The sources of my knowledge and information and the grounds of my belief are the official files and records of the United States, information supplied to me by other law enforcement offices, as well as my investigation of this case, together with others, as a Special Agent with HSI.

I hereby verify and declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated: 04 - 09 - 19

Daron S. Babcock Special Agent, HSI

# JS 44 (Rev. 12/12) Case 1:19-cv-01461-SEB-MJD Document 1 Filed 04/11/19 Page 1 of 2 PageID #: 9

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

purpose of initiating the civil di	ocket sheet. (SEE INSTRUC	TIONS ON NEXT FAGE O	r misro	KW.)					
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VI. CAUSE OF ACTION			re filing (1	Do not cite jurisdictional state	utes unless div	versity):			
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VIII. RELATED CASI IF ANY	E(S) (See instructions):	JUDGE			DOCKE	T NUMBER			
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#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44

Authority For Civil Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

- **I.(a) Plaintiffs-Defendants.** Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.
- (b) County of Residence. For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)
- (c) Attorneys. Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".
- **II. Jurisdiction.** The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.Cv.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below.

  United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here.

United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included nere. United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.

Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.

Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; **NOTE: federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.**)

- **III. Residence** (citizenship) of Principal Parties. This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.
- **IV. Nature of Suit.** Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If the nature of suit cannot be determined, be sure the cause of action, in Section VI below, is sufficient to enable the deputy clerk or the statistical clerk(s) in the Administrative Office to determine the nature of suit. If the cause fits more than one nature of suit, select the most definitive.
- **V. Origin.** Place an "X" in one of the six boxes.

Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.

Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.

Remanded from Appellate Court. (3) Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.

Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date. Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.

Multidistrict Litigation. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407. When this box is checked, do not check (5) above.

- VI. Cause of Action. Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity. Example: U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553 Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service
- **VII.** Requested in Complaint. Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P. Demand. In this space enter the actual dollar amount being demanded or indicate other demand, such as a preliminary injunction. Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.
- **VIII. Related Cases.** This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related pending cases, if any. If there are related pending cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.

**Date and Attorney Signature.** Date and sign the civil cover sheet.

# UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA INDIANAPOLIS DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
V.	)	Cause No. 1:19-cv-1461
\$85,270.00 UNITED STATES CURRENCY,	)	
Defendant.	)	

# WARRANT FOR ARREST OF PROPERTY

#### TO: ANY OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE OF THE UNITED STATES

WHEREAS a Complaint for Forfeiture In Rem has been filed in this Court on the 11th day of April, 2019, by Josh J. Minkler, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana, against eight-five thousand two hundred and seventy dollars in United States Currency ("\$85,270.00"), defendant herein, for reasons and causes set forth in the Complaint;

YOU ARE HEREBY COMMANDED to take custody of and to deliver the defendant currency into the possession of the United States of America, to be detained in the possession of the United States or its designee until further order of this Court, and you will make return thereon not later than ten (10) days after execution of process.

Dated:	
	Laura A. Briggs, Clerk

Laura A. Briggs, Clerk United States District Court Southern District of Indiana Arrest Warrant to be issued by the Clerk pursuant to Rule G(3)(b)(i) of the Supplemental Rules for Admiralty or Maritime Claims and Asset Forfeiture Actions, for property in custody of the United States.